



## Foreseeing and Responding to Ethical Challenges in the Care of Patients with COVID-19.

The whole world is facing a humanitarian emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic. And this crisis will shape a new culture in a tension between the patient-centered approach of clinical care under normal conditions and the public-centered approach of clinical care under emergency conditions.

Our caregivers want to discuss some of the ethical challenges they are facing. Questions and ethical challenges such as: How will we at Catholic Health and our community make fair decisions about using scarce resources, protect public health, and keep essential services running? Specifically, how are ventilators and other limited goods and services distributed fairly during a pandemic such as we are in now? What do we do when ventilator demand, or trained staff to operate ventilators, exceeds the supply? How do we make fair rationing decisions remain transparent before, during, and after the crisis?

We have an ethical duty to develop rules and tools for making fair decisions, to make ethical reasoning clear, and to be accountable to our community. Pandemics do not respect boundaries and what happens in one city, county, or state will affect its neighbors. Pandemic forces competitors to become collaborators.

Three Ethical Duties of Catholic Health Care Leaders Responding to COVID-19 are:

- Duty to **Plan**: *Managing Uncertainty*
- Duty to **Safeguard**: *Supporting Workers and Protecting Vulnerable Populations*
- Duty to **Guide**: *Contingency Levels of Care and Crisis Standards of Care*

Catholic Health is developing an Ethics Advisory Team during this public health emergency. The goals of the team are as follows:

- To provide resources in order to prepare ourselves.
- To support clinicians in managing foreseeable ethical challenges in the care of patients with COVID-19
- To respond to staffs moral distress due to some of the ethical challenges they may be faced with.
- To support and contribute to discussion, review, and updating of relevant policies and processes regarding the ethical duties related to the common good.
- To accommodate resource limitations, infection control restrictions, visitor restrictions and recommend policy and practice guidelines.
- To collaborate with interdisciplinary palliative care services concerning practice under contingency and crisis conditions, as their frequent collaboration under normal conditions lends to the likelihood that these services will be short-staffed.

Attached are some of the resources based on foundational principles of public health ethics and disaster response.

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